

Are You a Teen Working in Agriculture?



Protect Your Health
Know Your Rights

Labor Occupational Health Program
University of California, Berkeley

1998

Could I Get Hurt or Sick on the Job?

Every year **over 100 teens die** from agricultural work injuries in the United States. Another **2,000 get hurt** badly enough that they stay home from work.

Here are the stories of three teens:

- 17-year-old Gloria was picking oranges when she began to complain of nausea, dizziness, blurred vision and stomach cramps. The orchard had been sprayed with pesticides the day before. No warning signs had been posted.
- 15-year-old Luis caught his hand between two sections of irrigation pipe. His little finger was almost completely cut off. His other fingers were cut and broken.
- 17-year-old Martín died after harvesting melons in the hot sun for 4 hours. He was taken by ambulance to a hospital after complaining of a headache, nausea and difficulty breathing. He died because his body overheated.

Why do injuries like these occur? Teens are often injured on the job due to unsafe work conditions. Also, they may not receive adequate safety training and supervision.

What Are My Rights on the Job?

All farm workers have legal rights regardless of their immigration status.

Under California law, your employer must provide:

- ☐ Training about health and safety, including information on pesticides and other chemicals that could be harmful to your health.
- ☐ Toilets, hand washing facilities, and drinking water whenever there are 5 or more workers.
- ☐ Payment for emergency care and transportation if you get hurt or sick because of your job. You may also be entitled to lost wages.
- ☐ At least the minimum wage, \$5.75/hour as of March, 1998. In some cases, employers can pay less than minimum wage during your first three months, if you are under 18. Call toll-free 1-888-275-9243 for more information.

You also have a right to:

- ☐ Report health and safety problems.
- ☐ Work without racial or sexual harassment.
- ☐ Refuse to work if the job is immediately dangerous to your life or health.
- ☐ Join or organize a union.

What Hazards Should I Watch Out For?

Type of Work	Examples of Hazards
Hoeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Heat stress• Bending (can hurt back)
Hand Harvesting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pesticides• Ladders
Using Machines	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tractors• Sharp blades and conveyer belts
Packing Plant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slippery floors• Heavy lifting• Repeated movements

How Old Do I Have To Be To Work?

In California, you must be at least **12 years old** to be **hired** as a farm worker.

NOTE: Youth of **any age** may work at **any time** in **any job** on a farm owned or operated by their parents.

Is It OK To Do Any Kind of Farm Work?

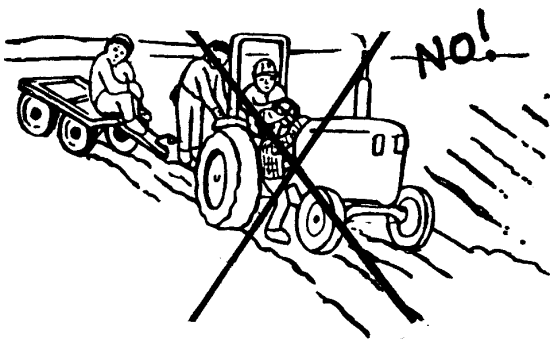
NO! There are laws that protect teens **under the age of 16** from working in certain jobs that have been identified as a ***hazardous occupations*** or ***agricultural zones of danger***.

In California no worker under 16 may:

- ☐ Handle or apply pesticides
- ☐ Drive, ride, or assist in operating a tractor or forklift
- ☐ Drive any vehicle for transporting passengers
- ☐ Use powered equipment such as a chain saw, hay mower, hay baler, or cotton picker
- ☐ Work on a ladder over 20 feet
- ☐ Work inside a silo

Also, no one under 12 may:

- ☐ Work near moving farm equipment
- ☐ Work near pesticides or other chemicals
- ☐ Work near any water hazards such as an irrigation canal



Are There Other Things I Can't Do?

YES! There are many other restrictions regarding the type of work you can and cannot do. Check with the **Farm Worker Hotline** to make sure the job you are doing is allowed.

Do I Need a Work Permit?

YES! Under California law, if you are under 18 and plan to work, you must get a work permit from your school (unless you have graduated).

What Are My Safety Responsibilities on the Job?

To work safely you should:

- ☐ Follow all safety rules and instructions
- ☐ Use safety equipment and protective clothing when needed
- ☐ Wear clean clothing daily
- ☐ Never eat or drink in the fields
- ☐ Never drink irrigation water
- ☐ Know what to do in case of an emergency
- ☐ Report any health and safety hazard to your supervisor



Should I Be Working This Late or This Long?


Child labor laws protect teens **under the age of 18** from working too long, too late, or too early. This table shows the hours teens may work in agriculture. (There are exceptions for students enrolled in an approved vocational training or apprenticeship program.)

Work Hours for Teens


	Ages 12—15	Ages 16—17
Work Hours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not before 7 am or after 7 pm during the school year • Not during school hours • 7 am–9 pm during the summer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not before 5 am or after 10 pm on school nights • Not before 5 am or after 12:30 am when there is no school the next day
Maximum Hours When School Is in Session	18 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 hours a day on school days • 8 hours a day Saturday–Sunday and holidays 	48 hours a week, but not over: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 hours a day Monday–Thursday • 8 hours a day Friday–Sunday and holidays • 10 hours a day in agricultural packing plants during peak harvest season Saturday–Sunday and holidays
Maximum Hours When School Is not in Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 40 hours a week • 8 hours a day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 hours a week • 8 hours a day • 10 hours a day in agricultural packing plants during peak harvest season

What If I Need Help?


- ☐ Talk to your boss to resolve the issue.
- ☐ Talk to your parents or teachers.
- ☐ Call the **Farm Worker Hotline** (staffed by the U.S. Department of Labor) to make a complaint about wages, hours, health or safety, sexual harassment, or discrimination.

 (800) 733-3899

- ☐ Call the **Linea Campesina** for referrals on employment, housing, health care, education, and emergency food.

 (800) 789-9993

- ☐ Call U.C. Berkeley's **Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP)** for health and safety information and advice.

 (510) 642-5507

You have a *right* to speak up!

It is illegal for your employer to fire or punish you for reporting a workplace problem.

